

available. Folks were earning \$15.75 an hour to stay home because of the unnecessary \$2 trillion bill pushed through by congressional Democrats on a party line vote.

Employers became desperate. Many were forced to offer massive sign-on bonuses and other incentives just to find enough workers to continue operating as normal. Unfortunately, some had to close their doors.

Tennessee's Governor Bill Lee, a businessowner himself, recognized the damage enhanced Federal unemployment benefits were causing on restaurants and retail stores. He noticed many couldn't compete with \$300 a week from the Federal Government on top of State unemployment benefits.

Fortunately, he put a stop to the flow of Federal unemployment dollars in Tennessee, and he was right. At last check, there were about 13,000 unemployment claims in Tennessee, compared to roughly 60,000 claims this time last year.

Still, the cost of living has increased every month under the Biden administration, and the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projects it will continue to impact Americans at least into 2023.

This is what happens when you do what is politically expedient. This is the direct result of runaway deficit spending.

The Federal Reserve is now having to be the adult in the room and raise interest rates to lower inflation. Raising interest rates is a harsh step, but one made necessary by the Biden administration's reckless handling of the economy.

It will make it harder and more expensive to borrow money for your first home or to buy a new car. Raising interest rates will also cause our economy to slow down. This means people will lose their jobs, their savings, and in many cases, even their small businesses.

Our economy already got 1.5 percent smaller in the first quarter of the year. It is why many economists are predicting a recession or worse in the next 12 months.

It didn't have to be this way. The President and congressional Democrats didn't have to borrow and spend so much money. This administration inherited one of the strongest economies in my life. It took fewer than 2 years for them to completely destroy it. President Biden must do better.

UNIVERSAL MEAL PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PORTER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic closed schools and left millions of children without meals they needed, our government took action. Emergency waivers eliminated income caps and gave meal providers flexibility in delivering food.

Even now, with schools reopened, these waivers are getting healthy

meals to children without burying families under mountains of paperwork, but these provisions are set to expire on June 30.

As 97 percent of meal providers like schools struggle to pay soaring food prices, these protections should be strengthened, not stopped.

This year, California became the first State to provide free meals to any student. Offering no-cost meals to everyone, regardless of income, helps resources reach the kids who need them most.

This will also help California's kids in schools perform better. Free meals contribute to better attendance, fewer nurse visits, and higher test scores. California's universal meal program will benefit schools and families. The Nation should follow our example.

TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, the greater our delay in taking action on climate change, the higher the price tag will be for families and our economy.

Last week, Californians suffered through an intense heat wave. Temperatures went over 100 degrees in parts of our State. That is bad for public health and bad for our economy.

A study by the Atlantic Council estimates that the total economic loss from excessive heat is at least \$100 billion annually. They also estimate that this loss could double by 2030 and quintuple by 2050 if we don't take climate action.

Simply put, the fiscally responsible thing to do is for Congress to act quickly to prevent further losses. Taking climate action will lower and stabilize costs for families.

High temperatures aren't just bad for human health. They are bad for our economy. Heat waves push prices for electricity higher, costing us billions. We should not leave families in California and across the country to figure out their budgets while Washington figures out climate change.

The need for climate change is urgent, not just for our planet, but also for our pocketbooks.

PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, our Nation is failing people with post-traumatic stress disorder. During June, PTSD Awareness Month, we must commit to doing better.

Mental health affects many across our Nation, but I rise today to shine light on the brave young people dealing with PTSD.

Too many Americans, including many with PTSD, go without the mental healthcare they need because their insurance won't cover it. I wrote a bill, which is now Federal law, to crack down on insurance companies that break the rules and refuse to cover mental health the same way they cover physical health. I am proud the House is considering additional proposals I have worked on to strengthen the enforcement of protections for mental health coverage.

When a child experiences a traumatic event, like emotional or sexual abuse, it harms their emotional, social, and cognitive development. These adverse childhood experiences are linked to substance use disorder, chronic health issues, and PTSD.

We cannot let trauma or related challenges hold students back from getting high quality educations. The effect of these experiences doesn't end when children leave their homes for college. They bleed into their daily lives, including in the classroom.

I am proud to introduce legislation, the Student Mental Health Rights Act, which would direct the Department of Education to study mental health, issue guidance to help schools level the playing field, and support students in overcoming their mental health challenges so they can complete their schooling. Our students need this help.

For Americans with PTSD of all ages, awareness is not enough. They need action.

RETURNING TO FISCAL SANITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the chilling state of the American economy. The stock market is tanking. The American people know what a disaster President Biden and the majority's economic policies have been, and they are acting accordingly and expressing the lowest consumer confidence in a record 50 years of data.

Pumping trillions in spending through this body, including the so-called American Rescue Plan, has, in large part, caused a 40-year high in inflation as the CPI rose to 8.6 percent in May.

The Nation is \$30 trillion in debt, and the CBO predicts \$1.6 trillion in deficits over the next decade. The Federal Reserve will be forced to continue to raise interest rates, further exacerbating the beleaguered economy.

Gas prices are at \$5 a gallon, due to the President's assaults on American oil drilling and fracking and domestic energy exploration, and the Green New Deal priorities of the majority and this administration are exacerbating the energy crisis.

As The Wall Street Journal recently asked: Has anyone, other than unsuccessful green energy subsidy firms, benefited from the Biden economy?

What is more, the President's \$5.8 trillion tax-and-spend budget is fiscally irresponsible. Biden's budget cuts \$428 million in Customs and Border Protection's budget in the midst of a border crisis.

It skyrockets Federal spending by a third, compared to prepandemic levels, calls for \$2.5 trillion in tax hikes, and sets this country on a course of extended fiscal doom at a time when we are currently on the precipice of a recession.

The American economy cannot sustain a Federal Government that is